cashew nuts, etc. While the edible oils and pulses were imported for processing and re-export. Increased domestic production of these commodities could reduce the need to import these commodities.

Adverse effect of cheap timber imports

3360. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of the COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of small scale manufacturing units in the rural areas in Punjab based on timber have been closed down due to cheaper imports of raw materials as well as finished goods resulting in slump in consumption level of farm forestry products;

(b) whether Government have received any requests from Punjab to help the State in the establishment of wood based paper mills/pulp/board industries there and North-Western region of the country to boost farm forestry and help the poverty ridden families of the State; and

(c) the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Government of India has forwarded the request of the State Government to Paper Industry Associations & Trade Bodies to consider it while deciding the location of their new plants.

Decline in Export of Pepper and Cashew

3361. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will Minister of the COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that the export of value added pepper such as crushed and ground pepper to United States fell considerably in the beginning of the year and the export of cashew slipped to 7 per cent in 2005-06; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the details of steps taken to rectify the above?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir. The export of value

added pepper to United States during 2005-06 has in fact increased from 2580 metric tonnes in 2004-05 to 3062 metric tonnes in 2005-06. However, the global export of cashew decreased in 2005-06 to 1.14 lakh metric tonnes from 1.26 lakh metric tonnes in 2004-05.

(b) The marginal decrease in the export of cashew has been due to increased competition from Vietnam and sluggish international markets. For boosting export of cashewnut, the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India, Kochi is undertaking several export promotion programmes under various schemes of the Government of India. Cashew exporters from all over the country are eligible to avail assistance under these schemes.

Production of Cardamom

3362. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the unremunerative price of cardamom in the year 2005-06 has forced down growers to scale down agricultural inputs;

(b) if so, whether there is any proposal to enhance the subsidies for replanting, new planting, irrigation facilities and rain water harvesting facilities;

(c) if so.whether steps will be taken to introduce subsidies for fertilizers and pesticides through Spices Board; and

(d) the steps taken to maintain the production of the crop in the light of the decline in cardamom prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINSTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir. Although, there was a decline in the price of cardamom in the year 2005-06 as compared to 2004-05, there is no reported scaling down of agricultural inputs and cultural operations in general in the cardamom plantations due to decline in the prices of cardamom.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) The following developmental schemes are implemented by the Spices Board for maintaining the production of the crop: